CRISIS24 HORIZON

Advice Sheet - Civil Unrest, Riots and Demonstrations Advice

View full article in Crisis24 Horizon

Categories: Security

Civil unrest can range from small, organized rallies to large-scale demonstrations and rioting. It is rare that travelers or expatriates are directly targeted, unless they work at or patronize a business or government element that is the direct cause of the unrest. People may also be harmed simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Civil unrest can arise in any country, globally and it should be remembered that no location is completely free of this risk. Recent history has witnessed significant cases of social unrest occurring across the globe, including USA, UK, France and Hongkong, all of which are mentioned locations are generally considered to be low risk.

The ability to anticipate civil unrest is only an advantage if the information you are receiving is accurate and valid. The most effective way to reduce your vulnerability is to monitor the environment for public calls to action and avoid areas where people have gathered to demonstrate. Even peaceful rallies can spur violence or be met with an aggressive security response. Bystanders may be arrested or harmed by security forces using water cannon, tear gas, rubber bullets or other crowd control measures.

Precautionary Advice

Pre-departure:

- Carry out research on the location you are travelling to. There are several avenues to visit to gather information on the current situation on the location you are visiting. Government websites such as the US State Department https://www.state.gov/ and the British Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice are a good source of information and normally up to date.

- It may be your company travel policy to speak with your company security manager who will be able to provide information of the location you are visiting once your travel is confirmed by management. Request from your security company provider the latest intelligence and mitigations to assist you in country.

- Before any travel is booked, ensure your company provide the details of the insurance and the procedure to assist. Ensure the insurance is suitable to cover all aspects of your travel destination and itinerary.

During your Stay:

- Once you have arrived in location, familiarize yourself with the locations of the Police stations, Hospitals, your embassy or consulate, your hotel and meeting locations, routes to the airport and Government buildings. Demonstrations usually take place close to Government buildings, police and military installations, Universities, and religious sites. If you do not have security assigned to you, ask your hotel staff of known hot spots and locations.

- Avoid getting into political, religion or sensitive conversations, keep all personal views to yourself and stay partial to prevent antagonizing and upsetting local personnel.

- It is recommended to dress down and maintain a low profile to avoid standing out in public. Carry a copy of your travel documents such as your passport, visa, driving license and the contact numbers for your company Point of Contact, the local embassy 24/7 contact number and insurance 24/7 number.

- Updates from your security provider, company security manager and logging on to your embassy and local media web sites should be a daily routine to keep track of local events.

Actions to be Taken during Civil Unrest:

- On occasions, demonstrators have worn the same garment, color or item to symbolize a united common cause. Examples of this are the French Yellow vests Protesters in 2018, Thai protestors wore yellow shirts in 2008, while during post-election protests in Iran, opposition demonstrators wore token items in green such as scarves, bracelets, etc. Pay attention to such differentiators and make sure that you are dressed in a neutral manner.

Before Leaving Your Accommodation:

- Speak to hotel staff, pre-arranged security for any rumours regarding unplanned gatherings.

- Ensure your phone is fully charged and you have copies of your travel documents and emergency contact numbers.

- Inform your security manager or local security POC that you are leaving the accommodation and let them know the estimated time that you will arrive at your designated location.

- Allow yourself plenty of time to arrive at your planned location allowing for diversions.

- Avoid locations where police and security forces are conducting operations or expected clashes with the demonstrators.

If Encountering a Demonstration While Driving:

- If you see a gathering, rally or demonstration ahead of you, turn off the road as soon as possible but ensuring the road is not a dead end and you are able to maneuver around the gathering safely.

- If you unexpectedly turn a corner and find yourself amongst demonstrators, remain calm. Ensure your doors are locked, keep the vehicle revs low and speed down so not to draw anymore attention than you already have.

- Quickly assess the best direction, normally the closest side street, to head to so to remove yourself from the area. Do not drive through a crowd.

- If you unable to drive away, it is recommended to park up, lock the car and leave it. Take shelter in the nearest safe location.

- If the crowd is upon you quicker then you anticipated, stop to the side and switch of the engine. Lock the doors and remain calm.

If Encountering a Demonstration While on Foot:

- Remain calm, the demonstrators do not know who you are and will believe you are part of their protest. Be confident but don't draw attention to yourself.

- Walk with them and mimic the actions of the group, but slowly move to the edge of the crowd and stay away from the aggressors and ring leaders.

- Look for a safe exit away from the crowd and slowly walk away, don't run, this will bring attention to yourself.

- If you are caught up in the dense crowd, stay away from any glass shop windows and doors, stay firm on your feet and move with the flow until you are able to move of in a safe direction.

- Should you be mistaken by the police or security forces as a demonstrator and arrested, do exactly as they say and do not resist. Contact your embassy and company security manager for assistance.

View full article in Crisis24 Horizon

The information in this document is for use only by the intended recipient. Crisis24 owns copyrights in the information, and it may not be reproduced, redistributed, or forwarded without express written consent. The information is provided "as-is" and is subject to change at any time. Use the information at your own risk. This information may be translated by machine or artificial intelligence, and may contain errors. Crisis24 disclaims all warranties related to any translation, express or implied.

© GardaWorld 2000-2026. All rights reserved.